

our citizens hold in common, including love of family, gratitude to God, the importance of community, and a commitment to respect, diversity, tolerance, and religious freedom.

Laura and I offer our best wishes for a memorable holiday.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

The President's Radio Address *December 30, 2006*

Good morning. This week, as Americans prepare to welcome a new year, we do so with heavy hearts and fond memories of our 38th President, Gerald R. Ford. We mourn the passing of a courageous leader, a true gentleman, and a loving father and husband. On behalf of all Americans, Laura and I send our prayers and condolences to Mrs. Ford and the entire Ford family.

Gerald Ford was a great man who devoted the best years of his long life to public service. He fought for his country during World War II. After returning home, he won the first of 13 elections to the United States Congress. The people of Michigan admired his dedication and decency, and so did his fellow Members of Congress. Gerald Ford rose to become a leader of his party, and he earned the respect and good will of all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Gerald Ford always believed in the importance of answering the call to duty, and he was there for the Nation when we needed him most. In December 1973, he accepted the responsibilities of the Vice Presidency. And the following August, he became President of the United States without ever seeking the office. Providence gave us Gerald Ford's steady hand and calm leadership during a time of great division and turmoil. He guided America through a crisis of confidence and helped our Nation mend its wounds by restoring faith in our system of government.

In his 2½ years as President, Gerald Ford distinguished himself as a man of integrity and selfless dedication. He always put the needs of his country before his own and did what he thought was right, even when those decisions were unpopular. Only years later would Americans come to fully appreciate the foresight and wisdom of this good man.

In recent years, Americans have honored Gerald Ford with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Congressional Gold Medal, and the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award.

Through it all, Gerald Ford stayed true to the values that first led him to a life of public service, and he helped share that spirit with a future generation of leaders. He served as a mentor for Vice President Dick Cheney, former Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld, former Chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan, and many others. He brought out the best in those around him and in our whole Nation.

To the end, Gerald Ford never lost the spirit that Americans grew to admire so much. This spring, I visited President and Mrs. Ford at their home in Rancho Mirage, California. At age 92 and battling health problems, he was still telling jokes and displaying the optimism that helped guide our Nation through some of its darkest hours.

Now America will stand with the members of the Ford family in the difficult hours and days ahead. Across the country, there has been an outpouring of grief and

affection for President Ford. I've ordered flags to fly at halfstaff for 30 days in his honor. This weekend, his body will lie in state at the United States Capitol. And on Tuesday, Laura and I will join former Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Carter at a funeral service at the National Cathedral as part of a National Day of Mourning.

Gerald Ford's life spanned nine decades and took him from the football fields of his boyhood in Michigan to the halls of power in Washington, DC. At every stage of his journey, he displayed a decency, patriotism, and courage that Americans will always admire. As we say goodbye to the year 2006, we bid farewell to one of the finest public servants America has ever

known. We give thanks for the gift of his remarkable life, for the caring man who touched so many lives, and the wise President who helped heal our Nation.

May God bless Gerald R. Ford. Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:20 a.m. on December 29 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 30. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 29 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Message on the Observance of New Year's Day 2007 *December 31, 2006*

Over the past year, we have reached important goals and confronted new challenges. At the start of this New Year, we move forward with trust in the power of the American spirit, confidence in our purpose, and faith in a loving God who created us to be free.

In 2006, the number of jobs steadily increased, wages grew, the unemployment rate dropped, and we achieved our goal of cutting the deficit in half three years ahead of schedule. Thanks to the hard work and innovation of the American people, our economy has been growing faster than any other major developed nation. Significant tax relief has helped our citizens keep more of what they earn and fuel an economy that is vigorous and healthy. My Administration will continue to work to help create more jobs, reduce the deficit, and spread prosperity to all our citizens.

Last year, America continued its mission to fight and win the war on terror and promote liberty as an alternative to tyranny and despair. In the New Year, we will re-

main on the offensive against the enemies of freedom, advance the security of our country, and work toward a free and unified Iraq. Defeating terrorists and extremists is the challenge of our time, and we will answer history's call with confidence and fight for liberty without wavering.

Our Nation depends on the fine men and women in uniform who serve our country with valor and distinction, and we remain mindful of their dedication and sacrifice. America's troops and their families exemplify the great character of our country, and they have earned the respect and admiration of a grateful Nation.

As we celebrate the New Year, we look with hope to the year ahead and the opportunities it will bring.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a happy New Year. May God bless you, may God bless our troops and their families, and may God bless America.

GEORGE W. BUSH